



Asleep at the Wheel Driving While Drowsy Can be Deadly

Driving drowsy and driving drunk, is there a difference? Not much, says a national sleep expert.

In fact, a recent Cornell University study found that between 200,000 and 400,000 collisions involving drowsy drivers occur each year, claiming as many as 6,500 lives.

So as Americans look ahead to summer time activities in which they tend to drink too much and stay up too late, it is important to know the following:

Drowsy drivers are falling asleep at the wheel second only to drunk drivers). A drowsy driver and a drunk driver are similar because of their reduced reaction time, inability to focus and pay attention to driving the car.

If you become aware that you are nodding off, then you are past the time you should have stopped. That's a danger zone. Don't continue driving because you will fall asleep.

Get out of the car and walk around. Rolling the windows down or drinking coffee to stay awake just doesn't cut it.

Sleep loss accumulates from night to night. Sleep shortages only continue to build.

If a person gets six hours of rest but needs eight, within five nights, he has a ten-hour sleep debt. Most people notice a sleep shortage between 10 and 20 hours. The result often leads to colds, other viruses, reduced cognitive abilities, and plain old crankiness.

Accidents involving drowsy drivers can be avoided if people made sleep a priority. Just as people are conscious of their diets and getting to the health club, make sure you are sleeping enough hours.

Sleep shortage can be due to America's 24-hour-a-day culture.

Things don't shut down. People stay up longer for entertainment and get up earlier. Its so we can get things done, but the irony is we are less productive because we are tired."

Scientists have found that the natural rhythm of humans put them in a lull between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. those crucial hours when a person is likely to fall asleep or have an auto accident because blood pressure and temperature is lowered.